

THE GROWTH OF INDIVIDUALISM

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wage-earning proletariat, it could do no more than repeat, with meaningless iteration, its traditional lore as to the duties of master to servant and servant to master. It had insisted that all men were brethren.

But it did not occur to it to point out that, as a result of the new economic imperialism which was beginning to develop in the seventeenth century, the brethren of the English^ merchant were the Africans whom he kidnapped for slavery in America, or the American

Indians whom he stripped of their lands, or the Indian craftsmen from whom he bought muslins and silks at starvation prices. Religion had not yet learned to console itself for the practical difficulty of applying its moral principles, by clasping the comfortable formula that for the transactions of economic life no moral

principles exist. But, for the problems involved in the association of men for economic purposes on the grand scale which was to be increasingly the rule in the future, the social doctrines advanced from the pulpit offered, in their traditional form, little guidance. Their practical ineffectiveness prepared the way for their theoretical abandonment.

They were abandoned because, on the whole, they deserved to be abandoned. The social teaching of the Church had ceased to count, because the

Church itself
had ceased to think. Energy in economic
action,
realist intelligence in economic thought—
these qualities
were to be the note of the seventeenth
century,
when once the confusion of the Civil War
had died
down. When mankind is faced with the
choice between
exhilarating activities and piety
imprisoned in a
shrivelled mass of desiccated formulae, it
will choose
the former, though the energy be brutal and
the intelligence narrow. In the age of Bacon and
Descartes,
bursting with clamorous interests and
eager ideas,
fruitful, above all, in the germs of economic
speculation,
from which was to grow the new science of
Political
Arithmetic, the social theory of the Church
of England